US State Department Report on Human Right Practices

2943. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the United States Department report on Human Right practices which has referred to religions freedom in Indian at "State and local levels only partially" and also criticised "social violence" in the country, as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 29th February, 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the Government's reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The US State Department's Human Right Report is an intenral report of the United States, mandated by the US Congress. It_ discusses the state of human rights in 190 countries.

(c) It is a report of US Administration to the US Congress. Government of India has not been consulted in any manner. We regard it as an internal exercise of the US. We do not respond to it. We take no cognisance of it.

Pak Mercenaries Along LOG

2944. CHAUDHARY CHUNI LAL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news item captioned "Pak amassing mercenaries along LOC" appeared in the Hindustan Times dated March 20, 2000;

(b) if so, the reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government have taken up the issue of ISI activities with Nepalese Government; and

(d) if so, the results achieved ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, Government have seen the report appearing in the Hindustan Times of 20th March, 2000. Government remain firm in their resolve to ensure the sanctity of the Line of Control and to this end defeat all Pakistani attempts to violate the LOC, including through its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism.

(c) and (d) Government have discussed from time to time with the Government of Nepal our concerns about the ISI misusing Nepalese territory and the open India-Nepal border for activities inimical to India's interest. Reports received by Government indicate increasing evidence of ISI using Nepal as a staging post for terrorist activities directed against India. The Nepalese Government have been sensitized on this issue.

The Government of Nepal have assured that their territory would not be used for activities inimical to India's interest and have been extending their cooperation to Government in this regard. Measures have been taken to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly with regard to implementing effective border management. The concerned agencies of tlie two Governments remain in regular touch to coordinate efforts to tackle this problem. There are also bilateral institutional mechanisms, such as the Joint Working Group on Border Management and Home Secretary level talks, which have been evolved to specifically develop cooperation on security matters and to address these concerns. In pursuance of the decisions taken in these meetings, both sides have agreed to jointly coordinate measures, including stepping up vigil along the contiguous border districts of India and Nepal, to prevent misuse of the open India-Nepal border for activities directed against India.

Indo-US Agreement to fight Terrorism

2945. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA ; Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that India and the USA have entered into an agreement to jointly fight terrorism;

(b) whether differences exist between Government's stand that of the USA on the definition of a terrorist; and

(c) if so, what are Government views in thisiegard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes, Sir. India and the United States announced their decision January 2000 to constitute a Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group took place on February 7-8, 2000 in Washington D.C. During the recent visit of the US President to India, the two sides expressed their determination to intensify co-operation in combating terrorism.

(b) and (c) In a joint statement issued at the end of the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism, the two sides unequivocally